

# MARYLAND'S READY BY 21<sup>®</sup>

## Action Plan

Adopted by the  
Maryland Children's Cabinet

September 2009



Dear Friends,

What does it mean to be ready by 21?

In Maryland, it means that all children are equipped with skills and a knowledge base that will help them live independently.

Every child in Maryland should have what he or she needs to become a successful adult by the age of 21. They should be safely and stably housed and engaged in education or competitive employment with health benefits. It is our goal, as One Maryland, that every child is prepared to live an independent and productive life.

The Maryland Children's Cabinet has worked diligently to address all of these issues. We thank each of the agencies involved in the development of this action plan for their commitment to ensuring that "Ready by 21" is not just a slogan, but a reality for children in Maryland as they enter adulthood.

Sincerely,



Martin O'Malley



Anthony Brown



## Ready By 21 Overview

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The Ready By 21 Team, chaired by Department of Human Resources (DHR) Secretary Brenda Donald, was established in January 2008 to oversee the implementation of the Maryland Children Cabinet's Ready By 21 Action Plan.

The following are the goals outlined in the Ready by 21 Five Year Action Agenda:

1. All Marylanders will understand the urgency of providing supportive services and resources, are aware of existing gaps, and are supportive of investments that will improve the odds for youth to be Ready by 21.
2. All Maryland's youth, especially older youth (14+), will have the support of capable, competent and caring adults.
3. All Maryland's transition-age youth, with an emphasis on youth transitioning out of public systems, will have access to safe and affordable housing that is convenient to services, supports, transportation, schools, employment and other youth.
4. All Maryland's youth, especially transition-age youth, will receive necessary supports to ensure health and well being.
5. All Maryland's youth, with an emphasis on vulnerable youth, will be prepared to successfully transition into post secondary education, advanced training and the workforce.
6. Maryland's social service and juvenile service systems will treat all young people equally and fairly.
7. Maryland will have an infrastructure that promotes sufficient funds and is held accountable for the preparedness of transition-age youth for college, work and life.

The Ready by 21 Leadership Team convened four subcommittees whose membership included local providers, stakeholders and state child serving agency staff to develop benchmarks in the areas of Education, Employment, Health, and Housing. Cross-cutting issues, which cross multiple age groups and subject areas, and corresponding benchmarks were also identified. This document is the compilation of all five areas, with corresponding strategic action steps. The Action Plan is intended to benefit all youth; unless otherwise specified, benchmarks and action steps apply to all youth. Benchmarks are listed according to the age level or range when services should commence and continue through adulthood, as appropriate.



## Cross Cutting Issues

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- Youth will receive a Maryland State identification card.
- Maryland will establish and maintain a savings plan for youth to build assets.
- Youth will begin the self-awareness and career exploration processes in alignment with the Career Development Framework as adopted by the Code of Maryland Regulations - COMAR 13A.04.10.01 and .02.
- Youth will be able to comfortably discuss their personal desires in a dating situation.
- Youth will be financially literate.
- Youth will be treated equally and fairly.



## Cross Cutting Issues

Action Steps	Responsible Agencies	Timeframe
a) Advocate for a requirement that all youth have a MVA - administered ID by an age to be determined; b) Engage MVA regarding barriers to youth obtaining a driver's license by piggybacking on ongoing discussion between DHR and MVA.	MVA, MSDE, DHR	October 2009 – September 2010
a) Meet with the Community Reinvestment Act Group (Bank representatives that meet monthly to discuss community engagement) to discuss possible restrictions/waivers regarding minors opening bank accounts; b) Explore various savings options, including IDAs and other asset building programs.	a) MSDE, Banking Institutions; b) Private Foundations, Governor's Office for Children	October 2009 – September 2010
Develop a cooperative agreement with MHEC and institutions of higher education to provide financial literacy training for young adults pursuing post-secondary education.	MHEC, USM, Higher Education institutions that are not part of USM	December 2009
a) Create a youth friendly website for all youth resources, including access to career exploration opportunities and services, which will be linked to the DOD website for transition-age youth; b) Launch a media campaign to increase awareness of the website.	a) Children's Cabinet; b) DLLR, LWIB/WIA, One-Stop Centers	December 2009 – June 2010
a) Review the Healthy Adolescent Development Guide to determine if additional content is needed; b) If the Guide is approved, share with State agencies and community-based organizations to incorporate into current trainings with staff, the community and foster parents.	RB21 Housing Subcommittee	March 2010
Support the implementation of the Cash Campaign legislation, which requires the development of pilot financial literacy training in three public high schools.	DHR, DJS, MSDE, DHCD, DHMH	June 2010
Create a uniform training for all youth workers to address six key skills: disabilities awareness, cultural awareness/competency, community conferencing, crisis intervention and de-escalation, adolescent brain development, and disproportionality, and ensure coordination with current workforce training initiatives.	Children's Cabinet	June 2010
Further develop youth and young adult leadership in Maryland by supporting organizations such as Youth Motivating Others through Voices of Experience (M.O.V.E.) Maryland, the Maryland Foster Youth Resource Center and the MD Youth Advisory Council.	Children's Cabinet	Ongoing

## Education Benchmarks

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### Age

- 14
  - Youth in every school system understand graduation requirements.
  - Youth should read and compute at grade level.
- 15/16
  - Youth will have a concrete plan detailing how he/she will complete high school, earn a certificate of program completion, or obtain a GED which includes specific steps to meet any gaps in required courses. Plans will be signed by appropriate school personnel, parent, and youth and maintained in school records.
  - Disconnected youth will have an established re-engagement plan.
- 17/18
  - Youth will have a concrete plan for postsecondary education, employment and/or training, which will include the completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).
  - Transition plans for foster youth will include specific educational goals and financial assistance plans.
  - Graduating disabled youth will understand their service needs and will receive information on how to access disability support services.
- 19-21
  - Youth will have access to postsecondary supportive services (e.g., financial aid, counseling, tutorial).
  - Youth with disabilities exiting school will be aware of and engage with community supports.
  - Youth with disabilities who are completing a Maryland Certificate of Program Completion will be prepared for life after school and linked with the appropriate State agencies and CBOs as part of the transition planning process.



## Education Action Steps

Action Steps	Responsible Agencies	Timeframe
Update information regarding graduation requirements posted on the MSDE and local school system websites.	MSDE, LSS	October 2009
a) MSDE and state child serving agencies to develop and distribute sample academic and career plans that are part of the MSDE Career Development Framework; b) School-wide personnel trained to administer and track plan.	MSDE- DSE/EIS, Partner Technical, Assistance agencies, MSDE-DORS	October 2009
Complete the 2009 certification process for COMAR 13A.04.10 Career Development.	MSDE	October 2009
MSDE will provide DHR caseworkers with a copy of each student's academic and career plan.	MSDE	October 2009 - Ongoing
MSDE - DSE/EIS will continue to work with local school systems to ensure that every student with a disability, beginning at age 14, participates in transition planning. This planning includes post-secondary employment goals and the course of study that will reasonably enable the student to attain these goals.	MSDE- DSE/EIS, MSDE-DORS	October 2009 - Ongoing
MHEC and USM will encourage institutions of higher learning to partner with schools in their area to create opportunities for youth to visit campuses, earn college credits, learn about admissions and financial aid application procedures or otherwise explore or learn about post-secondary options.	MHEC, USM, MSDE	October 2009
Identify foster youth who have applied for the FAFSA and those youth who have not in order to inform service delivery to youth, e.g. encouragement to pursue higher education or assistance in navigating critical next steps in the college admissions and financial aid processes.	DHR, DJS, MHEC	October 2009
Develop Standard Operating Procedures for each State agency regarding the referral of disconnected youth to the appropriate sister agency; b) Provide manual to CBOs; and c) Connect youth and CBOs to LMB systems navigators.	Children's Cabinet	December 2009
Support efforts to redefine definition of "drop out" as part of the scope of the upcoming Dropout Prevention Summit.	MSDE	December 2009

## Education Action Steps

Ensure that scholarship, grant, and financial aid information is included on the website for youth.	Children's Cabinet	December 2009
Create draft language to expand tuition waiver statute to include youth leaving the system for legal guardianship (in addition to adoption) to be vetted with legislators, etc.	MHEC, USM, DHR	December 2009
Each student with an IEP will have an IEP transition activity and/or career development goal that focuses on preparation for post-secondary education and/or training.	MSDE -DSE/EIS, MSDE -DORS, MANSEF, LSS	December 2009 – Ongoing
Graduating disabled youth will receive an exit document that summarizes their academic achievement, functional performance and supports and accommodations needed to be successful in post-secondary education and employment.	MSDE -DSE/EIS, MSDE -DORS, MANSEF, LSS, MHEC	December 2009 – Ongoing
a) Determine what types of financial aid counseling are being provided to students receiving financial aid awards; b) Engage with post-secondary institutions to examine gaps in services.	MHEC, USM, Higher Education institutions that are not part of USM	December 2009
Child-serving agencies will formally involve community based organizations in the transition planning process for youth with disabilities, e.g. CBOs will be involved in the process of developing and implementing IEPs and discharge/transition plans.	DHR, DJS, MSDE, DLLR, DDA	December 2009 – Ongoing
Continue to enhance alternative ways for students to earn credits, i.e., night and weekend school, on-line, externships, credit-recovery programs.	MSDE, CBOs	March 2010 – Ongoing
a) Identify educational services that have delivered significant cost-savings; b) Establish compacts to fund service provision by using expected cost-savings.	Children's Cabinet	March 2010
Enhance students' access to high-quality, comprehensive programs designed to improve literacy and numeracy through the following: a) Encourage local SES providers to infuse approved reading programs into their programs; b) Determine if there are MSDE approved numeracy programs; c) Encourage SES and OST programs to work together to provide wrap around services; d) Determine if tutoring can be built into summer youth employment programs.	MSDE	June 2010



## Employment Benchmarks

### Age

- 14
  - Youth will voluntarily begin to participate in a paid or unpaid work experience, job shadowing or volunteer opportunity that is relevant to a career field of their choice. Wherever possible, experiences will count toward service hours for graduation.
  - Youth will begin the self-awareness and career exploration processes in alignment with the MSDE Career Development Framework.
  - Youth will have high-quality workplace-based learning experiences as recommended by the Emerging Workforce Committee of the Governor's Workforce Investment Board.
- 15/16
  - Youth will receive assistance in the exploration of employment and/or occupational interests and the mapping of degrees, skills and/or training required for possible fields of interest.
- 17/18
  - Youth with special needs will be educated about the employment transition services and resources available.
  - Youth with special needs will have a concrete plan for post-secondary education, employment and/or training.
  - Youth will be referred to their given LWIB.
  - Youth will receive assistance in enrolling in any desired occupational skills training.
  - If a youth is exiting school and has a Career Development Plan that identifies a goal of going directly into a career, he/she will receive counseling regarding how to find a job, maintain employment and advance in a chosen career path.
- 19-21
  - By age 19, youth will have taken advantage of progressively responsible work experience opportunities within their chosen career pathway.
  - If youth is not earning a living wage, youth will be engaged in planning for additional training or skills development that will increase his or her earning potential and receives assistance in job search and career advancement.



## Employment Action Steps

Action Steps	Responsible Agencies	Timeframe
Support the work of the Career and Technology Education Taskforce of the P-20 Council as it deliberates and makes recommendations regarding the expansion of Career and Technology, Education programs, as recommended by the Emerging Workforce Committee of the Governor's Workforce Investment Board.	Children's Cabinet	Ongoing
Review programs of instruction within Maryland's school systems to ensure that requirements are aligned with 21 <sup>ST</sup> century workplace skills, as recommended by the Emerging Workforce Committee of the Governor's Workforce Investment Board.	MSDE	Ongoing
Starting at age 14, eligible youth will be referred for participation in their local summer youth employment program.	Children's Cabinet, LWIBs	Immediately
Connect youth who have participated in the summer youth employment program to year-round employment opportunities through the local one stop centers. Caseworkers and case management staff will refer foster youth and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) youth to summer and/or year-round training and employment opportunities through MD RISE (Reaching Independence and Stability through Employment).	MSDE, LSS, DHR, DLLR, DJS, DSS, LWIB/One-Stop Centers	September 2009
DLLR and the Workforce Investment Network will promote the services of One Stop Centers and the LWIBs' youth coordinators to education and human services agencies in their respective jurisdictions. Agencies will encourage collaboration through partnerships, i.e. DHR –DLLR partnership grants.	Children's Cabinet DLLR, Workforce Investment Network	October 2009
Engage local businesses through the LWIB/WIA One-Stop Centers and local Chambers of Commerce that align with youth's career interests to increase work experience and job shadowing opportunities for youth and ensure that LWIB/WIA One-Stop Centers connect with local school systems so that youth are informed about their services.	MSDE, DLLR, DJS, DSS	October 2009

## Employment Action Steps

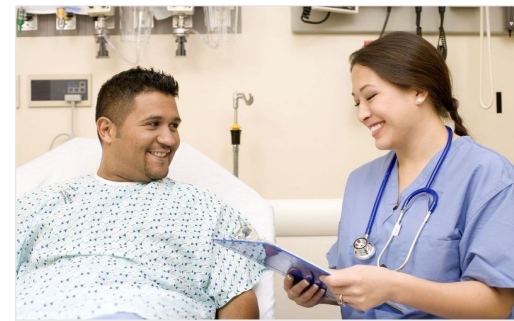
Starting no later than age 14, utilize MBRT's <a href="http://www.BeWhatIWantToBe.org">www.BeWhatIWantToBe.org</a> website to develop career awareness and explore careers.	MSDE, MD Business Roundtable	October 2009
Ensure that WIA Youth Coordinators participate in the transition planning team from DOD youth.	MSDE, MHEC, DOD	October 2009 – Ongoing
Connect youth to their local WIA One Stop Center through the MSDE Career Development Framework.	MSDE, DLLR, DJS, Departments of Social Services (DSS) , LWIB/ One-Stop Centers	October 2009 – Ongoing
a) Develop a standard template for the Career Development Framework for students without an IEP; b) Utilize the student's IEP, wherever applicable, and place the template in the student's official school record to inform service plan development by providers and to serve as a repository of services delivered, as appropriate.	Children's Cabinet	December 2009
IEP Teams, as appropriate, will identify a paid employment strategy for each student with an IEP.	MSDE - DSE/EIS, MSDE - DORS, DLLR, MANSEF, LSS	December 2009 – Ongoing
MSDE - CTAL will provide professional development to local school system transition coordinators on the use of the individual academic and career plan as part of transition planning for students with disabilities.	MSDE-DSE/EIS; MSDE - DORS; MSDE - CTAL	March 2010

## Health Benchmarks

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### Age

- 14
  - Youth will have complete medical records.
  - Youth will have the opportunity to review their medical records with a caseworker annually.
  - Service providers will receive information and professional development on youth development, best practices, and locally available resources.
  - Youth will receive a comprehensive health assessment, including mental health, and quality services in a timely manner to address their needs.
  - Youth will identify the providers he/she will use.
  - Youth will receive information about the adverse consequences of substance abuse.
- 15/16
  - Youth will have an understanding of and strategies for interacting with the health and mental health care systems and managing any medical conditions they may have.
- 17/18
  - Older youth will access services through multiple avenues.
  - Youth will have an understanding of health care coverage options.
  - Youth with mental health issues transitioning out of child-serving systems will be educated on their specific health needs and will have a plan to obtain services in the adult mental health care system.
- 19-21
  - Youth will progressively demonstrate increased ability to interact with the health and mental health care systems and manage their health, including avoiding high-risk behaviors.
  - Health care coverage will be available for all youth (at least to the age of 22).





## Health Action Steps

Action Steps	Responsible Agencies	Timeframe
Encourage mental health providers' adoption of the Transitioning into Independence (TIP) Program, an evidence-supported set of principles and practices for working with youth age 16-25 who have mental health conditions.	DHMH	September 2009
a) Support statewide efforts to ensure portability of medical records; b) Require DHR and DJS caseworkers to review medical records as part of transition planning process.	DHR, DJS, DHMH	October 2009
a) Present the Healthy Adolescent Development Guide to the Children's Cabinet; b) Infuse the guide into established trainings for state child serving agencies; c) Assist in the dissemination of the Healthy Adolescent Development Guide to youth serving agencies and; d) Require state contractors to participate in this training.	Children's Cabinet	October 2009 – March 2010
a) Map out potential providers of free or low cost insurance for specific groups of youth (dependent minors, college youth, independent out of school youth etc.) and determine which youth are not covered; b) if there is sufficient capacity, identify methods of outreach needed, e.g. a state sponsored web based database, informational packet, Medicaid training, etc; c) if there is insufficient capacity, identify funding for expansion, and entities to provide insurance coverage, e.g. community colleges.	RB21 Health Subcommittee	October 2009 – March 2010
a) Identify existing health resource websites and arrange importation of data into the youth resource website; b) Work with Employment Subcommittee to supply the health related content for the proposed youth website.	a) RB 21 Health Subcommittee; b) RB 21 Health and Employment Subcommittees	December 2009
Determine whether plans are underway to expand school-based health and mental health services. If not, recommend that MSDE and DHMH increase capacity and outreach.	DHMH MSDE	December 2009 – June 2010
Make the Voluntary State Curriculum the "Mandatory State Curriculum" in order to ensure that every child has access to physical and health education programs, including information regarding substance abuse, mental health, and HIV/AIDS.	MSDE	June 2010
Coordinate efforts with the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Children's Mental Health Initiative grant for federal fiscal years 2009-2014 entitled MD CARES, which will develop a service delivery model to address the mental health needs of youth in foster care in Baltimore City, and fund policy and fiscal analysis, training, and infrastructure development to support adaptation and replication of the model statewide.	DHR and MD CARES staff	Ongoing

# Housing Benchmarks

## Age

- 14
  - Youth will live in safe, decent, and affordable housing, with a caring, competent adult.
  - Youth will demonstrate the ability to purchase items and understand the purchase process – including cost, sales tax, and tips.
- 15/16
  - Youth will understand how to purchase and manage a cell phone, including contractual payment, etiquette, and safety.
  - Youth will be able to go shopping for food, prepare simple food and meals, and safely store food.
  - Youth will be able to make good meal decisions when eating in fast food restaurants and shopping for food in grocery stores.
  - Youth will be able to use coupons, big box, and wholesale facilities to improve “purchasing power.”
  - Youth will be able to safely and effectively manage their money; establish alternatives to using check cashing services, and payday lending, etc.
  - Youth will be able to identify a safe haven for short stay housing, if needed.
  - Youth will begin to acquire necessary household items and care for them.
  - Youth will possess basic financial skills – checking/savings, loans/contract/budgets, credit cards.
- 17/18
  - Youth will be able to identify possible housing options, if needed, including prospective roommates and subsidized housing.
  - Youth will have a “safety plan” if current housing fails and assistance with re-engaging with family.
  - Youth will have basic knowledge of entitlement programs, qualifications and how to apply/receive assistance with application for SSI (Social Security Insurance), MA (Medical Assistance), TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), and WIC (Women, Infants and Children), etc.
  - Youth will develop an understanding of state and federal income tax responsibilities.
  - Youth will be able to understand the legal rights and responsibilities of tenancy and tenant-landlord relationships.
  - Youth will be able to understand their adult responsibilities – draft, voter registration, child support.
  - Youth will be able to understand financial obligations relative to loans and credit history.
  - Youth transitioning from DJS, DHR and DHMH systems will undergo a transition planning process.
- 19-21
  - Youth will possess the life skills required to maintain housing.
  - Youth will be able to maintain a personal budget and project the costs of living.
  - Youth will be able to establish and maintain a savings plan.
  - Youth will be able to understand taxes (including tax credits).
  - Youth transitioning from DJS, DHR and DHMH systems will undergo a transition planning process.



## Housing Action Steps

Action Steps	Responsible Agencies	Timeframe
DHR will advise DJS regarding rapid clearance procedures for kinship caregivers.	DHR, DJS	October 2009
Investigate school curricula and life skills training taught by other caregivers, i.e., ILPs, DJS, RTCs.	RB21 Housing Subcommittee	October 2009
Require transition plans to include housing and to specify when youth will make contact with a permanent housing option.	DHR, DJS	October 2009
Children's Cabinet agencies will request a prominent link on each of their respective websites to the Governor's website ( <a href="http://www.problemsolver.maryland.gov">www.problemsolver.maryland.gov</a> ) so that members of the public can assess their eligibility for entitlement benefits and services. The link will also be featured on the youth resource website (See benchmarks for cross-cutting issues.)	Children's Cabinet	October 2009
Provide information on alternative housing options through roommate sharing resources and affordable housing: <a href="http://www.mdhousingsearch.org">www.mdhousingsearch.org</a> in established professional development trainings, school settings, the youth resource website (see benchmarks for cross-cutting issues), local CBO's and libraries.	DHR, DJS, DHMH	December 2009
Identify and train Systems Navigators to provide targeted case management to assist homeless youth.	DHR, DJS, DHMH	December 2009



## Housing Action Steps

a) Request the National Alliance to End Homelessness to provide model language from other states regarding housing for youth under the age of 18; b) Housing Benchmark group will recommend language for new regulations.	RB21 Housing Benchmark Subcommittee	March 2010
Adapt Legal Aid document, “Homeless Youth and Young Adults in Baltimore: An Overview of Law”, to the statewide population and distribute through state agencies, including DHMH, DJS, and DHR and their contractors.	RB21 Housing Subcommittee BHYI, Legal Aid	March 2010
Train caseworkers and analogous staff in the administration of tenant training modules as a supplement to existing housing related content during the transition planning process.	DHR, DJS	June 2010
Incorporate tenant training into programs for homeless youth such as Restoration Gardens and City Steps and into the youth resource website (see benchmarks for cross-cutting issues).	DHR, DJS DHCD, DHMH	June 2010
Review life skills curricula utilized by providers.	DHR, DJS	June 2010
Engage MHEC and institutions of higher learning in discussion regarding current housing options for youth during college breaks and the possibility of expanding housing options.	MHEC, USM DHCD, DHR	June 2010
Establish “host” families programs for the holidays and summer.	DHR	June 2010
Implement model transitional housing options.	DHCD, DHR	June 2010
Develop the National Youth in Transition Database for youth in the child welfare system.	DHR	October 2010



# Acknowledgements

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To ensure youth are given the opportunity to provide feedback regarding youth centered public policies, the Maryland Youth Advisory Council and the Department of Human Resources Youth Advisory Board provided insight and feedback in the development of this document.

For copies of this document please visit the Governor's Office for Children's website at [www.goc.state.md.us](http://www.goc.state.md.us).

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## Acronyms

<b>BHYI</b>	Baltimore Homeless Youth Initiative
<b>CBO</b>	Community-based organization
<b>DDA</b>	Maryland Developmental Disabilities Administration
<b>DHCD</b>	Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development
<b>DHMH</b>	Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
<b>DHR</b>	Maryland Department of Human Resources
<b>DJS</b>	Maryland Department of Juvenile Services
<b>DLLR</b>	Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing and Regulation
<b>DOD</b>	Maryland Department of Disabilities
<b>IDA</b>	Individual Development Account
<b>IEP</b>	Individualized Education Plan
<b>ILP</b>	Independent Living Program
<b>LMB</b>	Local Management Board
<b>LSS</b>	Local School Systems
<b>LWIB</b>	Local Workforce Investment Board
<b>MANSEF</b>	Maryland Association of Non-Public Special Education Facilities
<b>MHEC</b>	Maryland Higher Education Commission
<b>MSDE</b>	Maryland State Department of Education
<b>MSDE - DORS</b>	Maryland State Department of Education, Department of Rehabilitation Services
<b>MSDE - CTAL</b>	Maryland State Department of Education, Career Technology and Adult Learning Services
<b>MSDE - DSE/EIS</b>	Maryland State Department of Education, Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services
<b>MVA</b>	Motor Vehicle Administration
<b>OST</b>	Out of School Time
<b>RTC</b>	Residential Treatment Center
<b>SES</b>	Supplementary Education Services
<b>USM</b>	University System of Maryland
<b>WIA</b>	Workforce Investment Act



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